

Series Editor's Preface

In the preface to the first tranche of volumes in this series, the series editors argued that, while recognising that some literary canons can conceive of a single 'Great Tradition', there is no such simple way of conceiving of Scottish literature's variousness. This year's tranche, the fifth, illustrates that variousness in two ways.

The subject of this year's author volume, Liz Lochhead, currently Scotland's Makar, illustrates the variousness of her talents as poet, playwright and, in a broader sense, figure of cultural significance. As she moves between poetry and playwriting, her work brings lessons from each genre to the other, highlighting the generic slipperiness and interpenetration that is such a feature of Scottish literature. Her work also illuminates relationships between Scotland's languages and dialects, particularly between the Scots and English languages – but also the varieties of dialect and register in Scots usage – as she brings her sharp eye and insightful wit to bear. In her art, Lochhead exemplifies even wider artform interaction as her painting, poetry and playwriting each shape aspects of her creative output.

The second volume this year is one of the series' topic volumes. In its own way, it also illustrates the variousness of the elements in the canon of Scottish literature, sliding between the oral and literary traditions – and their interaction – and voyaging among a wide variety of genres, including story, song, ballad and poetry. This is part of the reason it is entitled a Companion not to 'Scottish Traditional Literature', but to 'Scottish Traditional Literatures'. It considers the impact of traditional literatures in Scotland's several languages both on one another and on what is often more commonly, if in a more limited (and limiting) sense, defined as the Scottish literary tradition. In fact, this volume, like the rest of the series, challenges just what is meant by such a term. The volume pays particular attention to the role of tradition-bearers and those who collected traditional material and made it available to us. In doing so, it raises important and pressing questions about the nature of collecting and the conception of authenticity of tradition.

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